

# THE BALLARD HOUSE AND FAMILY

## YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA



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# THE BALLARD HOUSE AND FAMILY

## COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

### YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

by  
Charles E. Hatch, Jr., Historian



DIVISION OF HISTORY  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation



September 1969



U.S. Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## PREFACE

The "Ballard House" on Lot 54 in Yorktown within the bounds of Colonial National Historical Park was among the historic properties included in the purchase of the Blow Estate by the Federal government in October 1968. Documentary study of this structure was called for in RSP COL-H-15a, a study to garner information about the house, its dependencies, and the people associated with it, especially those in the colonial and revolutionary periods. It was deemed needed: "to support the preservation, rehabilitation, presentation and interpretation of this property. It [the house], a lesser structure, is notable as one of the two surviving frame buildings in the confines of Yorktown. It is probably more suggestive of the majority of the homes that stood in colonial Yorktown than the more substantial brick survivals."

In the author's view, the study has produced a good deal on the historical continuity of the building, with more supporting and suggestive data than was thought possible at the outset that the house is in form and shape indeed in large measure a colonial survival. The name "Ballard House" continues to seem appropriate in that Capt. John Ballard is the first person of known specific reference to be in residence on the property,

though several others could have lived here in the same or an earlier structure.

Once again the writer is heavily indebted to the good stenographic services of Mrs. Frances McLawhorn, of the Colonial staff, who worked his difficult long hand writing into easily used draft. Thanks go, too, to Frances Gastellum, of the Division of History, for the finished manuscript in the form that it has here.

Yorktown

September 19, 1969

Charles E. Hatch, Jr.

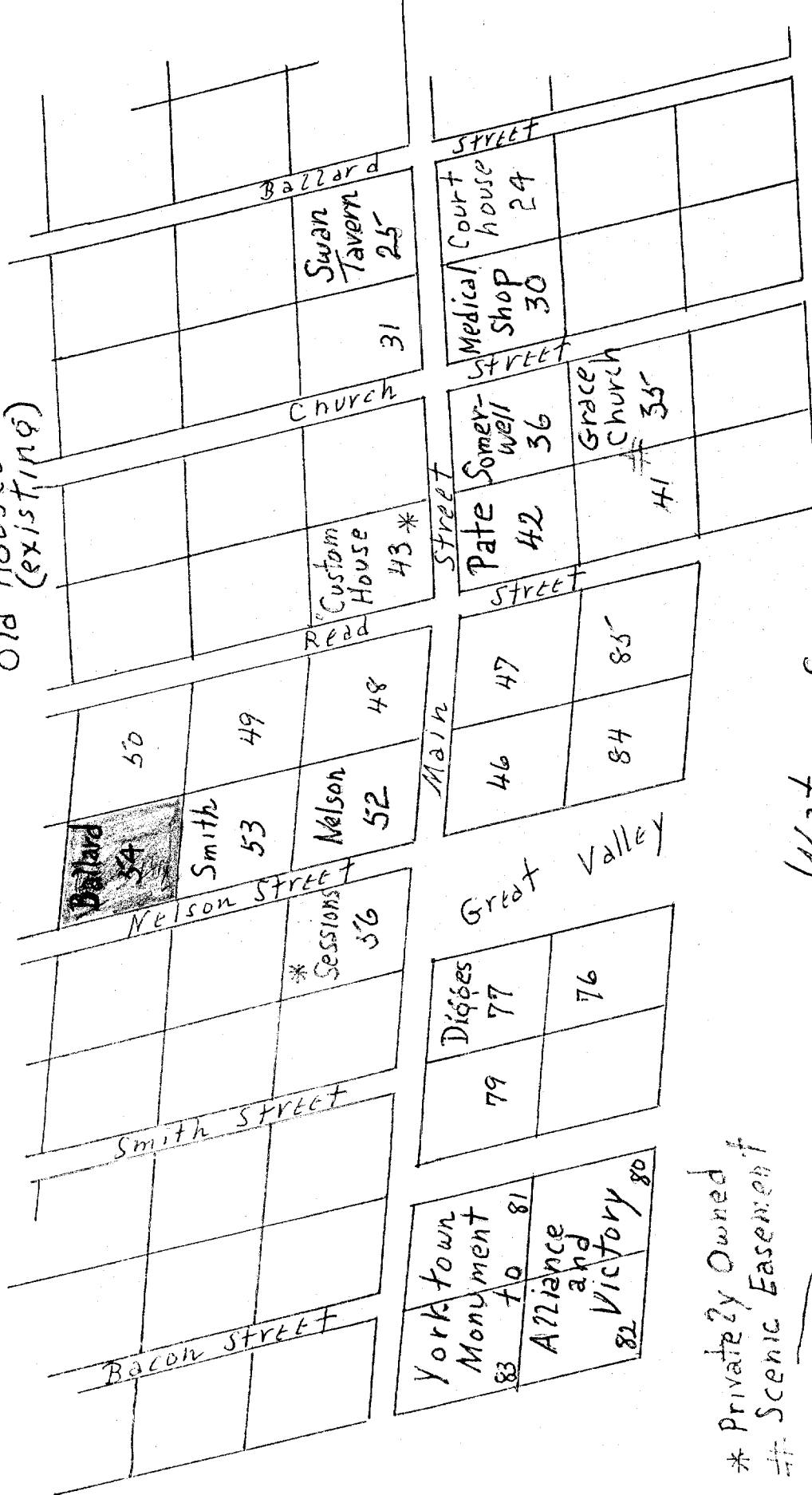
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# Yorktown Old Houses and Structures (existing)



\* Privately Owned  
# Scenic Easement

### Some Lot 54 Ownerships

The first to establish a good title to Lot 54 in Yorktown was Edward Fuller of Hampton parish in York County. He took title on June 10, 1706, from the trustees for "All that lott or half acre of Land Situate in York Towne being part of ye Port land there known by ye Numr (54) as by ye plat on Record doth appeare."<sup>1</sup> Almost immediately Fuller, a baker, conveyed the lot to Use Gibson, a "Carpenter," of York-Hampton parish, who was acting for himself and as an "Attorney" for his brother, Peter Gibson, in exchange for Lot 58 and "with all buildings thereon Erected."<sup>2</sup>

From all indications this transaction was either defective or cancelled by another instrument, since Lot 54 was "given & bequeathed" to Stephen Fuller, Edward's "Loving Son," in 1709 by his father, who described it as "my Lott & house in York Towne." Eleven years later, in February 1720, Stephen Fuller,<sup>3</sup>

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1. York County Records, Deeds & Bonds, No. 2 (1701-1713), p. 180. There was no reference to the assignment of the same lot to Thomas Sessions of York County, "Carpenter," in July 1702, "the Same never haveing been taken up before." Ibid., p. 55.

2. Ibid., p. 290.

3. Evidently Stephen's mother was Anne who, after the death of Edward, married Robert Harris of York-Hampton parish. Robert left legacies when he died in 1716 to his own sons and

a New Kent County planter, sold it "with the houses, etc" to John Gibbons of Yorktown for fifteen pounds current money of Virginia. It was then described as Lot "(54) . . . bordering upon Wm. Cheshire's Lott Joyning to the Street that leads to the now dwelling house of Mr. Thomas Nelson."<sup>4</sup> It was reported, too, that the "premises with their appurtenances are now in the actual possession of the sd John Gibbons."<sup>5</sup>

In March 1727 John Gibbons bequeathed to his "Son in-law John Ballard & my Daughter Elizabeth Ballard my lot in Yorktown which I Escheated from the Gibbons." Evidently John Ballard saw a defect somewhere in his title, for shortly after-

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to two sons of his wife, George and Stephen Fuller. Tylers Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, II, p. 272

4. This is the language of the deed of lease and in the deed of release it is given as "joining to the Street that leads to Mr Thomas Nelsons now dwelling house," Deeds & Bonds, No. 3 (1713-1729), pp. 346-47.

5. Deeds & Bonds, No. 2, pp. 346-47. Edward Fuller "of Yorke County" was a man of some estate. He gave his son William "of Age Now" his tract of land "in Merchant Hundred parish in James City County." Son George received the "Tract of Land where I now live." To daughter Mary Weathers went his "Negro man called Dick" and to Daughter Jeane Morland, "one Cow Calf." His wife Anne had "the Use of all my Estate dureing her widowhood." In case of her remarriage there was to be division, an equal division, between her and sons William, George, and Stephen, and daughter Anne. Edward's inventory tallied thirty cattle (cows, heifers, steers, yearlings, and one bull) and five negroes. Deeds, Orders, Wills, No. 13 (1706-1710), p. 255; Orders, Wills, No. 14 (1709-1716), p. 65.

wards the town trustees issued a corrected deed.<sup>6</sup> This house became his home, and in his will of 1744 he bequeathed the house and lot in this manner: "I give unto my Son Thomas Ballard and to his Heirs the Lott or half acre of Land whereon I now live described in the Plan of the Town by the Figures 54 together with all the Houses and appurtenances thereto belonging."

Along with this bequest went: (1) an acre of ground (two lots) bought from Gwyn Read on the southwest side of Yorktown where "Capt. Wm. Rogers lately dwelt," (2) Rich Neck, a plantation near Yorktown adjoining the land of Edward Baptist, and (3) his "Warehouse at the water Side."<sup>7</sup>

Seemingly Mrs. Elizabeth Ballard had a life interest in the home lot as she still possessed it in 1756. In a deed of March 15 of that year Lot 58, directly across the side street from Lot 54, was described as being "opposite to a messuage now

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6. Orders, Wills, No. 16 (1720-1729), pt. 2, p. 458; Deeds, No. 6 (1755-1763), p. 360. John Gibbons also gave a lot to his "Son Thomas." It was one that he had bought of Shepherd (Stephen?) Fuller, one (No. 58) "faceing the lot which I have given to my Son John Ballard."

7. Wills and Inventories, No. 20 (1748-1759), p. 3. Son John received a half acre "where Henry Walters now lives," with houses, son Robert received a half acre where "Susanna Thompson now lives," and son William also received a half acre lot; all had been originally acquired from Gwyn Read. His wife Elizabeth was to receive the rents from the "two lotts and houses" where Walters and Thompson were living. At this time neither John nor Robert was of age.

in the Tenure and Occupation of Mrs Elizabeth Ballard."<sup>8</sup>

Eventually Lot 58 fell to the use of her son Robert rather than Thomas as John Ballard's will had provided. This fact is clear from a deed of May 28, 1761, when Robert Ballard, "Merchant," and Anne his wife sold this lot and two other developed ones for a very substantial five hundred pounds current money of Virginia. The sale was to John Thompson, another merchant. The deed relates: "All that Lot or half Acre of Ground whereon the said Robert Ballard now lives situate in the Town of York and denoted on the plan thereon by the figures 54."<sup>9</sup>

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8. Deeds, No. 6, p. 52.

9. Ibid., p. 350. The other two lots included in the sale adjoined two lots (51 and 55) which formerly belonged to Capt. William Rogers and then in the possession of James Pride, Esq. John Ballard had bought these two lots in June 1737. The sale was for the three lots "with the Appurtenances."

### The Ballards on Lot 54

Through marriage to Elizabeth Gibbons, John Ballard came into ownership of Lot 54 as a bequest in 1727 from his father-in-law, John Gibbons.<sup>10</sup> Ballard was the son of Lt. Col. Thomas Ballard, who as one of the two original town trustees played an important part in the founding of Yorktown.<sup>11</sup> From him as well as from his grandfather, Col. Thomas Ballard, John inherited a tradition of public service.<sup>12</sup>

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10. Orders, Wills, No. 16, pt. 2, p. 458.

11. Besides his duties in the militia and as a trustee, Lt. Col. Thomas Ballard also served for a time as Sheriff for York County and as a Justice of the Peace. He also sat in the House of Burgesses for several terms between 1693 and 1711. He was for the most part a planter with extensive acres in York County. He married Catherine Hubbard and left several children when he died in 1711. Lyon G. Tyler, Encyclopedia of Virginia Biography (New York, 1915) I, 178; Edward M. Riley, "History of the Founding and Development of Yorktown, Virginia, 1691-1781," a typewritten manuscript report dated March 20, 1942, pp. 95-100.

12. Col. Thomas Ballard was Clerk of York County in 1652 and sat in the Assembly for James City in 1666. He was sworn a Councilor in 1670 but lost his seat because "of his sympathy with and furtherance of the rebellion" of Bacon. He was at one point considered as one of Berkeley's "wicked and pernicious councillors" but later as "a fellow of turbulent and mutinous speech and Bacon's chief trumpet, parasite, etc." His wife Anna was among the ladies that Bacon put on the breastworks before Jamestown to delay Berkeley's attack until his defences were completed. Ousted from the Council, Ballard continued as a prominent citizen and in 1680 was speaker of the House of Burgesses. Tyler, Encyclopedia, I, 130; William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, II, 274.

Following the mercantile line Capt. John Ballard became one of the more prominent merchants in Yorktown. In 1729 he obtained a grant, or permission, from the Virginia Council to use an "eighty foot square of the Beach below the bank at York Town" for "building a warehouse at the landing he now useth." For a good many years, too, he was a county justice and coroner. Also he was named surveyor of the streets and landings in Yorktown. Before his death in 1745 he came to own six lots in Yorktown and a warehouse on the waterfront besides his home on Lot 54.<sup>13</sup>

He left a young family and some of the concern for his children comes through in his will:

It is my Will and desire that my Son Thomas Ballard be bound to Mesrs Thomas and William Nelson or to Thomas Nelson Junr Esqr until he comes to the Age of Twenty one Years and that my Son John Ballard be bound when he comes to the Age of sixteen Years to the Sea if he shall approve of that if not then to some other calling as my Executors shall think proper till he comes to the Age of twenty one Years and that my other two Sons Robert and William be bound to some Trade or calling as my Executors shall think proper when they Arrive to Sixteen Years of Age and to serve til they arrive -the Age of twenty one and that my Sons live with their Mother til bound out and my Daughters till Marriage or til they respectively come to lawful age.

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13. Riley, "Yorktown," pp. 95-100; Executive Journals of the Council of Colonial Virginia, edited by H. R. Mellwaine (Richmond, 1930), IV, 207-08.

He loaned to his wife Elizabeth "during her Widowhood for the better enabling her to maintain and bring up my Children" the lot on which he lived (No. 54) "together with all the Houses and Appurtenances thereto belonging," and a number of slaves as well as "all my Houshold furniture and Kitchen furniture," also "my Chaise Harness and Horses and Cart and Horses" plus the rent from "two Lots and Houses." In the event of Elizabeth's "Marriage, or at her death," most of this and other property was earmarked for his son Thomas, who was also to get "my Gun Pistols Sword and Watch." There were, however, provisions for his other children.<sup>14</sup> For each of his daughters, Catherine and Elizabeth, there was to be "twenty Pounds Current Money to buy her a piece of Plate." Each, too, was to get a Negro woman and a girl, and Daughter Ann was to have two Negro girls. As executors of his will he named his "Loving Wife Elizabeth Ballard" and four of his friends and neighbors "to whom I give each a Gold Ring of a Guinea Price to be bought in

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14. Son John was to get a town lot with "the Houses and Appurtenances there to belonging" and a Negro boy. Son Robert was to receive a developed lot then rented out. For William there were two other lots and a Negro boy and girl. Perhaps he expected Thomas to carry on the business, as it was to him that John ultimately bequeathed his home on Lot 54 with its associated development, two other lots in town, his plantation near Yorktown "called Rich Neck," and "my Warehouse at the Water Side."

England." His will dated December 24, 1744, was proved in court on September 16 the next year. At the time of his death there was "A Cargoe of Goods unopen'd" that was inventoried at a gross value of £ 1283.4.11 and "Goods left in his store" valued at £ 465.18.10, both in "Sterling."<sup>15</sup>

Evidently Elizabeth Ballard continued in the home on Lot 54 with the children. At least she was here eleven years later. In some way, within a few years the home and lot was bought by, or descended to, Robert Ballard instead of Thomas Ballard as Capt. John Ballard had outlined in his will. On May 28, 1761, Robert, now a merchant, and his wife Ann sold it and two other developed lots to John Thompson for the considerable sum of five hundred pounds. Evidently this presaged a move to Princess Anne County since Robert was Clerk of Court there from 1761 to 1765 and represented that county as a burgess in 1766-68. His wife Anne evidently was from Princess Anne County.<sup>16</sup>

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15. Wills & Inventories, No. 20, pp. 3, 10.

16. Deeds, No. 6, pp. 52, 360; Tylder, Encyclopedia, I, 178. Anne Ballard was the daughter of Charles Sayer, who had been clerk of the court in Princess Anne County from 1716 to 1740.

Thompson - Powell - Cary

It seems possible that John Thompson was a ship captain who came ashore in Virginia to establish a mercantile business. He appears to have been operating in Yorktown by May 1749. In August 1751 his oldest daughter was whisked away into matrimony against his, but not necessarily against her own, will as reported by another Yorktown merchant and associate, Francis Jerdone.<sup>17</sup> Thompson seemingly prospered as a Yorktown merchant and was on the scene for almost three decades,<sup>18</sup> although for much of the time after 1768 he sought to get his business affairs in such order as would allow him to retire. He made this quite clear in a Virginia Gazette advertisement on August 16, 1768: "As I find myself very infirm, and not able to carry

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17. "Letter Book of Francis Jerdone" in The William and Mary College Quarterly, 1st Series, XI, 155, 160. Jerdone commented thusly on the "elopement" in a letter on October 29: "James Brown of New Castle carried off John Thompson's eldest daughter some time last August to Maryland & there married her which has so much offended Mr. Thompson that he has neither spoken to Brown nor as yet seen his daughter, and to disappoint Brown in his expectations immediately married his house keeper, who is young & not unlikely to have children by her, and by his declaration Brown need never look for a penny from him, this I believe is a sore disappointment."

18. Virginia Gazette Index, 1736-1780, by Lester J. Cappon and Stella F. Duff (Williamsburg, 1950), I, 1180.

on business, I intend to move as soon as I can settle my affairs, and have for sale the following articles: One lot, with a very good dwelling house, kitchen, and all convenient out-houses, in York town, adjoining Mr. David Jameson's two lots, with a large stable and chair house on them."<sup>19</sup> These were the properties he had bought in 1761 from Robert Ballard--Lot 54 where the dwelling house stood and half-acre lots adjoining nearby Lots 51 and 55 on the southwest. It seems of interest here to continue his enumeration as it bears on the kind of business man he was. His other holdings included:

one new convenient storehouse, near the town wharf; and one warehouse, at the water side; two lots and houses at Gloucester, on one of them a large warehouse, 40 by 20, and shedded, with a good sale loft; one sloop of about 1800 bushels burthen, well fitted, and ready to take in cargo; with a nine hhd. flat, and several valuable water Negroes, one of them an extraordinary good sail maker, I have also about 300 £ worth of dry goods, lately imported which I would sell with or without the above store, situated near the town wharf.

He asked applicants to see him in Yorktown.

There were no immediate takers for his offer of selling out and evidently he needed some cash. In April 1769 William Nelson took a mortgage on the residence where he was living.

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19. Purdie & Dixon, publishers, p. 3, c. 2. This advertisement, as often was the case, was repeated in the next weekly issue, September 1, 1768.

The lot<sup>20</sup> and its development and three slaves<sup>21</sup> became his collateral for the amount of £250.<sup>22</sup> In an effort to convert property into cash he resolved to try a lottery and this was duly advertised the next month. It was to be managed by ten of his friends and neighbors to whom he gave security.

The lottery was to have 700 tickets at 40 shillings each with 64 prizes and 636 blanks for a total value of £1400. In this announcement<sup>23</sup> he placed a £360 value on his Lot 54 development including the "dwelling-house and outhouses." The lot "whereon is a large stable" he listed at £70. Other evaluations were £100 for the "new storehouse near the wharf," £40 for the "warehouse at the water side," £80 for the large storehouse in "Gloucester town" and £40 for the "dwell house" there. And there were other items, such as 40 barrels of rum (30 gallons each), 10 barrels of sugar (250 weight each), a cow and calf,

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20. "All that Lot or parcel of Land situate lying and being in the Town and County of York adjoining the lots of David Jameson, Thomas Nelson, junr and the said William/ Nelson and all Houses."

21. "Dublin, Luch, Hager and their Increase."

22. Deeds, No. 7 (1763-1769), p. 462. In this deed Thompson was listed as "Gent."

23. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), May 11, 1769, p. 3, c. 2.

a cow and a heifer and a "double chair" plus experienced Negro "watermen."

But like the sale, the lottery seems not to have come off, or not to have been successful. In any case he was still trying to sell most of this same property when he advertised again in January 1770<sup>24</sup> that "I am not able to look after my business and intend to retire up the country in the spring." His house and lot (No. 54) were again listed, as was his nearby lot with the stable and chairhouse and the "two storehouses at the water side." And there was the schooner and crew.<sup>25</sup>

In October 1773 at long last John Thompson, Senior (perhaps he did have an heir as Jerdone had predicted), did find a buyer at least for L9t 54, "whereon the said John Thompson now lives," as well as the lot with a "stable thereon." The buyer was Thomas Powell, cited as a "Surgion of York Town and County." The sale price was £325.<sup>26</sup>

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24. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 18, 1770, p. 4, c. 1.

25. "A schooner that will carry 2000 bushels of grain, the greatest part of her frame of mulberry which I will either sell or freight, several valuable Negroes who understand going by water, and good pilots to any part of the bay, one of whom is an extraordinary good sailmaker, some house servants, one of them a very good washer, ironer, and sempstress." This latter likely was Hagar who had been a part of the security in William Nelson's deed of trust in 1769.

26. Deeds, No. 8, p. 406; Deeds, No. 7, p. 462.

Powell may have come into Yorktown from Spotsylvania County to work with Dr. Corbin Griffin, a well established physician. For a time the two had a partnership but this was terminated in 1772 when Powell announced: "On Thursday the 16th Instant (January) the Partnership between Doctor Corbin Griffin and myself is dissolved. I shall keep a shop, supplied with medicines, at my House, for Practice."<sup>27</sup> This was the same year that he married Elizabeth Digges, the daughter of Colonel Edward and Elizabeth Digges.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps his marriage had some bearing on the dissolution of the partnership with Dr. Griffin, and both factors could very well explain his purchase the next year of Lot 54 and the accommodations on it. Lot 54 then became the seat of his practice, being both his residence and his office. But Powell would not remain in Yorktown. Three years later he decided to locate in Fredericksburg. He announced his move publicly in the Virginia Gazette under a May 15, 1776, Fredericksburg date line: "The present situation of York has occasioned me to remove my Family to this Town. I shall open a large and fresh Assortment of Medicines in a Shop formerly kept

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27. Virginia Gazette (Purdie & Dixon), January 16, 1772, p. 3, c. 3.

28. The William and Mary Quarterly, 1st Series, I, 211. In the marriage record he was listed as Dr. Thomas Powell of Spotsylvania County.

by Dr. Mercer, and shall attend to Practice."<sup>29</sup> The fact that Dr. Powell was the owner of sixteen slaves in Spotsylvania County in 1783 indicated that he was successful in some measure in his new stand.<sup>30</sup>

Powell's removal to Fredericksburg led to new ownership and occupancy for his Yorktown property. On December 15, 1777, he, now listed as "Surgeon," sold Lot 54 and its accommodations plus the nearby lot "with a Stable thereon" to "William Cary of the County of York" for £500 "Current Money."<sup>31</sup> In addition Cary, in June 1778 cited as a "Merchant," paid off the old mortgage that William Nelson had taken in 1769 and had passed on as an asset to Thomas Nelson, Jr. This £250 had been reduced to some extent and "the balance due on the said Mortgage was £208.16.4-1/2."<sup>32</sup> Cary now moved from the "country" into the residence on Lot 54 in Yorktown and this became his home until his death a quarter century later.<sup>33</sup>

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29. (Dixon & Hunter), p. 6, c. 2.

30. The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography, IV, 294.

31. Deed Book, No. 6, p. 1.

32. Ibid., p. 21. The mortgage release was by Thomas Nelson, Jr., as "Eldest Son and Heir and Executor of Hon. William Nelson, Esq. Dec'd."

33. Evidently prior to this he had lived out in the county in York-Hampton parish where he was listed with tithables (two of them) as early as 1763. Tylers Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine, I, 179-80.

Cary was an active citizen locally being, with Abraham Archer, Naval Officer at Yorktown in 1782 as well as a county magistrate.<sup>34</sup> Cary was elected to Yorktown's first "Common Council" when its incorporation was implemented in 1787. He was also one of a number who were immediately "granted License to Retail Goods at their Stores in Yorktown" during the next year. In 1788 Cary was named one of the town's four aldermen and in 1789 he served as Yorktown's mayor.<sup>35</sup>

It is clear from his will, probated on July 15, 1805, that he had been a successful merchant and business man. Not having children, he made ample provision for his wife Sarah. There was a variety of provisions for her.<sup>36</sup>

- (1) He specified that she should receive "all the goods in my Store or Warehouse which may be on hand together with all liqures, provisions and Grain to use or sell as she may think fit for her own Benefit."

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34. Calendar of Virginia State Papers, edited by William P. Palmer, III (Richmond, 1883), 262, 409. In August, 1782 there was the case of the "Two Cutters from Bergon in Norway" with cargoes "of Salt and Bale Goods" that came into port. Since it required the Governor's permission to land, Cary and Archer sent one of the "Masters" to Richmond to the governor's office.

35. York County Records, Hustings Court Records, pp. 3, 4, 43, 46.

36. Wills and Inventories, No. 23 (1783-1811), p. 695.

- (2) There was "full power to import Goods from England to the amount of my money that may be due to me in that Country, and to sell and dispose of them as she thinks best for her own benefit."
- (3) To her he loaned "during her life the use of all my houses and Lands in York Town and adjoining thereto either to use herself or to rent out, I also lend her the use of all my furniture, Houses, Cattle, Hogs, Cart and harness chair and harness to use as she thinks proper, without being accountable for the same to any person."
- (4) To Sarah, also, went "the Interest of all my funded Stock in the treasury of the United States of America which interest is drawn half yearly, also on all Bonds, mortgages, Deeds of Trust or notes of hand which bear interest."
- (5) Debts due him he wished collected as soon as possible by his executors with the money going "out at Interest with Landed Security to double the value of the money so Lent the Interest arising I give to my Wife."
- (6) Sarah also was to have "my Watch and my Clock for her own use."
- (7) There were also lands in Kentucky "located by Land Warrants purchased jointly between myself and my deceased Friend, Jaquelin Ambler, Esq." One half of these were earmarked

for his wife and one half for his godson, Jaquelin Ambler Fisher.<sup>37</sup>

- (8) Not having children he willed that at his "Wifes decease . . . all my Estate real and personal may be equally divided between the Children of my Sister Martha Goosley, my sister Judith Eggleston and my Sister Elizabeth Eggleston which may be living at her my Wifes death."<sup>38</sup>

Seven years after Cary's death and after the death of Sarah, his heirs, in 1812, as stipulated in his will, sold his home and Lot 54 to one Ann Burt for "one hundred pounds Virginia Currency." The sale, by description, covered: "A Certain lot of land with all the houses or buildings thereon lying and being in the Town of York being the Same in which the aforesaid William Cary formerly lived and known in the plat of said Town by the No. 55."<sup>39</sup>

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37. There were two Kentucky surveys. One was for 500 acres in Campbell County and one for 160 in Fayette County.

38. There was a further provision "that my Boy Joe may be bound to some Good mechanic when he comes to the age of sixteen years to learn his Trade, and if he behaves himself faithfully and obedient to his present mistress during her life my will is that he may be Free at her decease and that my Executors pay him ten pounds in money & give him a good strong and Warm suit of Cloths."

39. Deed Book, No. 8, p. 255. From all indications (see especially the discussion of insurance policies that follows) this No. 55 was an error in record in the lot number and it should have been 54.

From Then Till Now

The Alexander Berthier plan of Yorktown drawn for billeting purposes for the French Army unit that wintered in Yorktown following the surrender of Cornwallis on October 19, 1781, clearly shows a structure in the general location where the present house stands. It is delineated as a major building unit, rectangular in shape with its long side parallel to the cross street (now Nelson Street). No dependencies are shown though this is not disturbing. Berthier may not have thought them useful.<sup>40</sup>

Fortunately in 1796 the then owner of the property, "William Cary residing in York Town," insured his residential unit: "My three Buildings on a Back and cross street now occupied by myself situated between the Lot of Col. John Jameson and that of a Cross street in the county of York."<sup>41</sup> Actually the policy enumerated four units though only three were given a value.

A - The "Dwelling House" was valued at \$800. It measured 60 feet long and 24 in width and was a structure

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40. See Illustration No. 1. The plan is Document No 29 in the Berthier Papers in Princeton University Library.

41. "Mutual Assurance Society against Fire on Buildings of the State of Virginia" Policy No. 100, photostat of original

"built with Wood & covered with wood two stories high."

B - The "Kitchen," a 30 by 16 feet structure, "Wooden," stood with its short dimension parallel to the cross street some 30 feet southwest of the dwelling. The value was \$100.

C - The "Smoke House" was parallel to the dairy and six feet from it as it was six feet from the north corner of the Kitchen. The value was given at \$100.

D - The "Dairy" was to the west corner of the dwelling some six feet away, being 10 feet square. This was deleted from the coverage after the policy was written.

Though this policy was drawn fifteen years after the Siege it could very well reflect a condition that had endured for some time. Needs of the Ballards (or even the Fullers and Gibbons before them), Thompsons, Powells, or Carys (William Cary was likely in occupancy in 1781) would not necessarily have varied a great deal as the general way of life remained the same in this century. References to residence and dwelling for this lot continue in the nineteenth century--Burt, Sheild, Ruben, and Chandler.

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(in Virginia State Library) is in the files of Colonial National Historical Park. See Illustration No. 2 for the plot plan given in the policy.

After acquisition by Anne Burt in 1812, the property became known as "Burts lot" and it was so designated in 1819. In 1838 it was referenced as "Samuel Sheild formerly Burts lot," in 1846 as Samuel Sheild estate, and in 1852 as "W.H. Sheild dwelling &c."<sup>42</sup>

Lot 54 and its residence came into the ownership and occupation of Henry P. Rebin (Ruben) "of Yorktown" and his wife Lissetta. When he died in January 1879, while temporarily living in Baltimore, he bequeathed to his "beloved wife Lissetta Rebin all the property of which I may died possessed, whether real or personal or mixed and wherever the same may be situated." This included Lot 54 - "The Lot of land and the improvements thereon."<sup>43</sup> In due course Lissetta remarried, became Mrs. Beer, and remained in residence on this property. Tax evaluation in the period from 1879 into this century would indicate a house in good repair. In 1879 its evaluation (house and lot) was \$950 and it compared well with houses in its class.<sup>44</sup>

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42. Insurance policies (Nos. 1401, 10767, 14293, and 17298) drawn to cover adjacent Lot 53 had these as the lot's southwest boundary.

43. Will Book, No. 14, p. 220.

44. York County Land Books, 1879, 1880, 1883, 1891, 1911 and 1912. The Edmund Smith House in 1879 was evaluated at \$500 and the Pate House on Lot 42 at \$700. These figures held in 1880 and 1883. In 1891 the comparison was Ballard House and lot at \$450, Smith House at \$350 and Pate House at \$400. Twenty years

Of particular note are the recollections of Mr. J. R. Chandler, a life-long native of Yorktown who is now 82 years old and was born in the house.<sup>45</sup> He recalls no exterior structural change in the house, which he knew as Pearl Cottage<sup>46</sup> though he does not know the origin of this name. All he believes to be very old though he assumes that the low section across the back represents an addition. It may, in his view, have come about through the enclosing of a porch added in the nineteenth century. Mr. Chandler clearly remembers two stairways in the house and the absence of any type of basement when he knew the house. As for the so-called northeast end addition, he views it as being "very old" ("it goes back a while") though it could be an addition at some early date.

If a building rather sketchily shown on a detailed Yorktown perspective view done in 1881 is correctly identified, then the house at this time had its full length, its end and internal

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later, in 1911 and 1912 it was \$450 (Ballard), \$200 (Smith) and \$575 (Pate).

45. He was interviewed by the writer on August 27, 1969.

46. This designation was common in the first half of this century and a designation that followed "Beer House," current for a time. Actually, too, the cross street in front of the house came to be known as Pearl Street. This was replaced officially by "Nelson Street" in the very early days of Colonial National Historical Park, likely a result of street naming growing out of the Sesquicentennial observance.

chimney, a back porch, and three rear dormers--except for the porch being much as it is today.<sup>47</sup>

The so-called northeast end apartment likely was an apartment only in more recent times. Previously a two feet eight inch doorway on the street side of the internal chimney connected the rooms here on either side of it, and there were plastered walls on each side of the opening. The studs here are "hand hewn timbers of poplar or gum."<sup>48</sup>

At this point it seems well to observe that the 1796 insurance drawing noted a residence measuring 20 feet by 60 feet and the present house includes a rectangle some 17 feet, plus or minus, by 56 feet. This is a reasonable variance for insurance dimensions which lack the preciseness of measured drawings. The fact that the policy specified a two-story dwelling need not be

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47. See Illustration No. 3. This is from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, October 29, 1881, p. 153.

48. This was the observation of Mr. Healy Jenkins, a carpenter on the rolls of Colonial National Historical Park, when he reopened a doorway here in January 1969. He placed it off its old location a little way (nearer to the chimney) to avoid plumbing pipes now in the wall. He found the studding very "hard and sound" except for some termite damage on the lower ends. He, also, reported: "Plaster on both sides of this wall was encountered. The laths were the same on both sides, being hand split lathes but attached with what was thought to be 'machine stamped nails.' The old doorway frame he remembered as being painted white." From a memorandum to the files in Colonial National Historical Park dated August 14, 1969, by Charles E. Hatch, Jr., recording an interview on August 11 with Mr. Jenkins.

controlling as it actually is a full first floor and a dormered second. There are five front and three rear dormers well spaced and proportioned. Normally this would have been called a story and a half but terminology was not always precise.<sup>49</sup>

The continuity of use and living on Lot 53 plus the absence of documentation for basic changes in construction in the last century combine to indicate colonial origin for the Capt. John Ballard House. Clyde F. Trudell accepted it as an "eighteenth century structure," being "one of the few frame buildings in Yorktown to have escaped the disastrous fire of March 3, 1814."<sup>50</sup> There has, however, been considerable change inside the house, particularly in repairs, maintenance, and adjustments to modern

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49. In 1853, for example, the Nelson House kitchen-washhouse, a true one-story building without dormers, was noted as a story and a half. Also, in the case of the Edmund Smith House some policies indicate a one-story structure and others a one, one-half, and it was always fully dormered. See two NPS reports, by the author of this study, for Colonial National Historical Park, "The Nelson House and the Nelsons" and "The Edmund Smith House on Lot 53 in Yorktown and Some of Its Associations" being issued through the Division of History, Office of Archeology & Historic Preservation).

50. Colonial Yorktown (Richmond, 1938), p. 140. Mrs. Sydney Smith, a local writer, about 1920, also, assigned it to the eighteenth century, assuming, it would seem, that it was built by the initial lot patentee, Edward Fuller. She also wrote of it as "Pearl Hall." Old Yorktown, (c. 1920), p. 17. There is only one other Colonial framed residence (the Dudley Digges House) and a second with some colonial elements (the Archer House).

living conditions. And in some quarters there is doubt as to just how much represents the old. Architectural study of the fabric of the house may hold the answer and archeological reconnaissance may yield other clues.<sup>51</sup>

Initially it would seem that the Ballard House and Lot 54 did not feature prominently, if at all, in the development of Capt. George Preston Blow's York Hall Estate.<sup>52</sup> However, this changed and on May 26, 1916, Blow, who was still cited as being of La Salle, Illinois, bought this lot, "piece parcel or lot of land, together with all buildings and improvements thereon," from Lissetta Beer, who retained a life interest. Mrs. Beer was in residence here and was to "have the use, occupation possession and control of and over all the said property and premises hereby conveyed for her home, so long as the said Lissetta

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51. Supervisory Architect Thomas N. Crellin, National Park Service, had this to relate after a considered quick tour of the house: "The historic period of this house is questionable. It does not appear to be of the early period of history at Colonial. Further research is necessary to establish a reasonably firm date." In a memorandum to Chief, Division of Historic Architecture, being a "Trip Report, Colonial NHP," dated October 28, 1968. A copy is in Park files.

52. This is reflected in "Plot Plan of 'York Hall'" by Landscape Architect Charles F. Gillette in "Restoration of a Southern Colonial Estate: 'York Hall', the Residence of Captain George P. Blow, Yorktown, Va.," by Griffin and Wynkoop, Architects, in The Architectural Forum (published by Rogers and Manson Company), December 1921, p. 212.

Beer shall live."<sup>53</sup> The life tenure evidently would be a short one and the property along with Lot 55<sup>54</sup> abutting it on the southwest, would be integrated into the Estate.

Actually the Lot 54 acquisition added two buildings and a well.<sup>55</sup> Blow later removed the two-story frame structure (approximately 32 by 16 feet) in the south corner of the lot and filled in the well. He left standing the old Ballard House (now "Beer Res.")<sup>56</sup> in the east corner of the lot, though he did not restore it in the same manner as he did the Nelson and Smith Houses. It was delineated as some 56 by 26 feet and parallel to the cross street. This house became the "gardener's house," or "Caretaker's Cottage." The structure built by the Blows opposite it on Read Street (on Lot 50) for this purpose became a "Lodge" and served

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53. Deed Book, No. 36 (1918-1919), p. 337.

54. This purchase for \$500 was from the heirs of Said A. Norton on April 17, 1920. Deed Book, No. 37 (1920-1921), p. 79.

55. "Topographical Map of Geo. P. Blow-Property," July 1919, by Charles F. Gillette. Blue print copy is in Colonial National Historical Park files. The 56 by 26 feet "Beer Res." is a reasonable approximation of the 1796 insurance policy measurements of 20 by 60 feet, whereas the 32 by 16 feet "2 sty frame" is definitely not. The well was shown some 27 feet behind the mid-point of the Beer Residence.

56. "York Hall, Yorktown, Va., George P. Blow, Esq: Record Plan," Plan No. 56-21a, by Charles F. Gillette, copy in files of Colonial National Historical Park.

sometimes as a guest house and sometimes as a rental property.  
This situation would continue until the purchase by the United States in October 1968.

ILLUSTRATIONS

*Plan York comm. pour servir à l'établissement du quartier d'Hyver. Du Régiment de Souffronois, et Des Grenadiers et Chasseurs de St Onge le 12. 1791.*

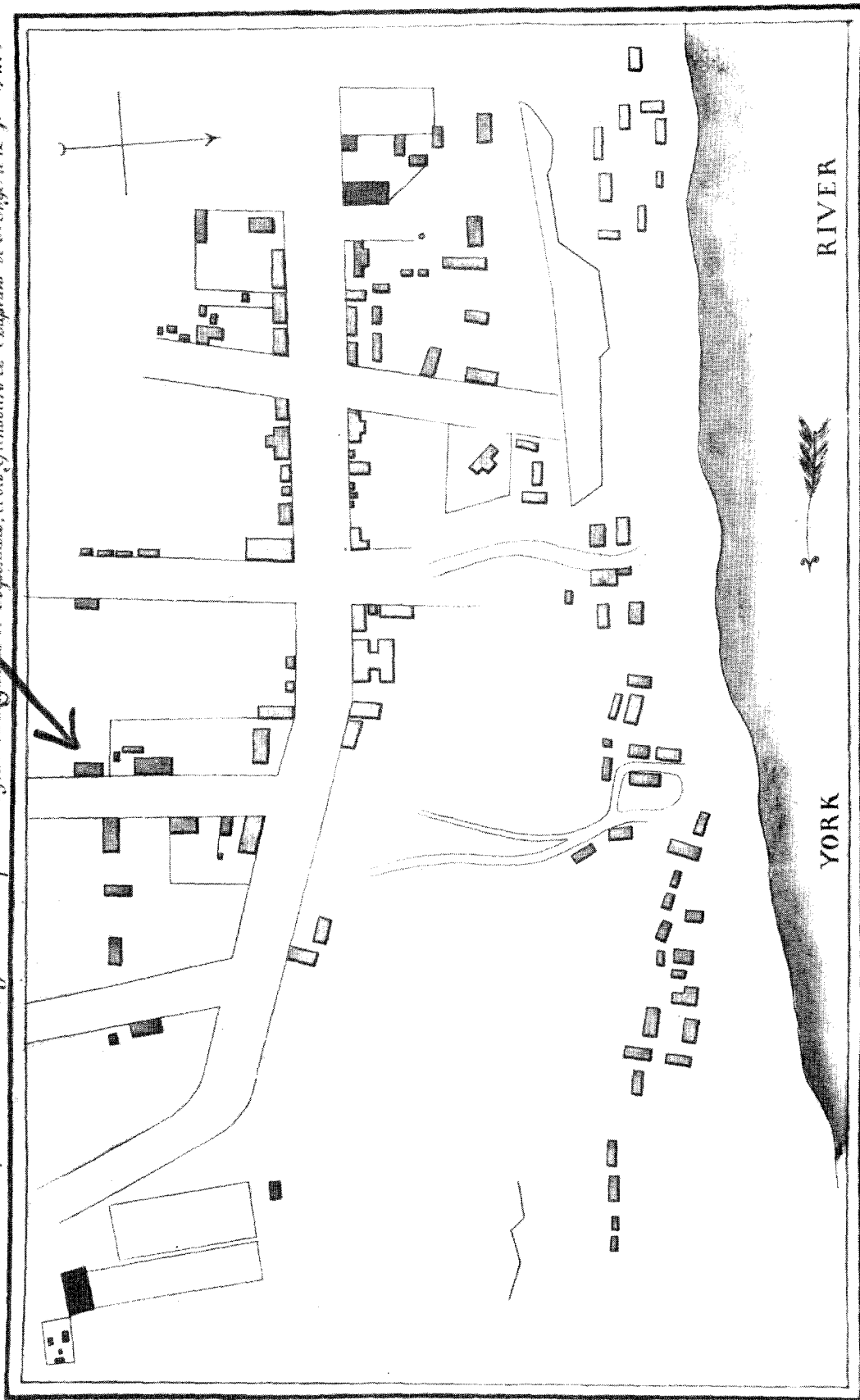


Illustration No. 1

York County Sc. to in due form  
 foregoing valuation for the said town  
 ore me, a Magistrate for the said town  
 York - Given under my hand this  
 first day of ~~April~~ in the year 1796  
 Hugh Nelson

The Street Thirty three feet wide

Dwelling House the front thirty feet  
 in length & twenty four feet in width  
 built with Wood & covered with  
 Wood two stories high

The Dwelling House  
 30 feet from the  
 Kitchen

B. Kitchen  
 30 feet by  
 16 feet

6 feet  
 Dairy  
 10 feet  
 6 feet

6 feet between

C. Smoke  
 4 feet  
 6 feet

6 feet

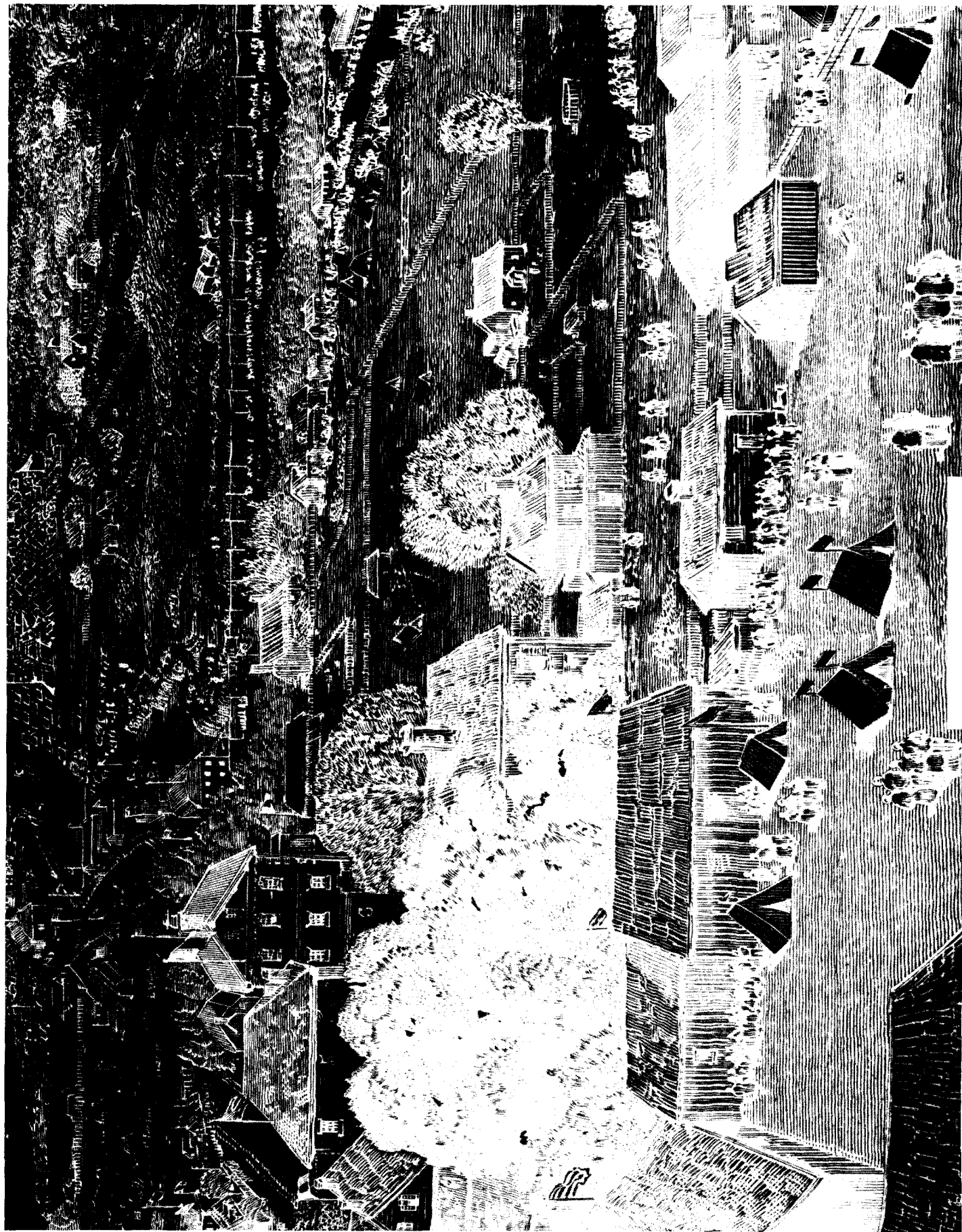


Illustration No. 3

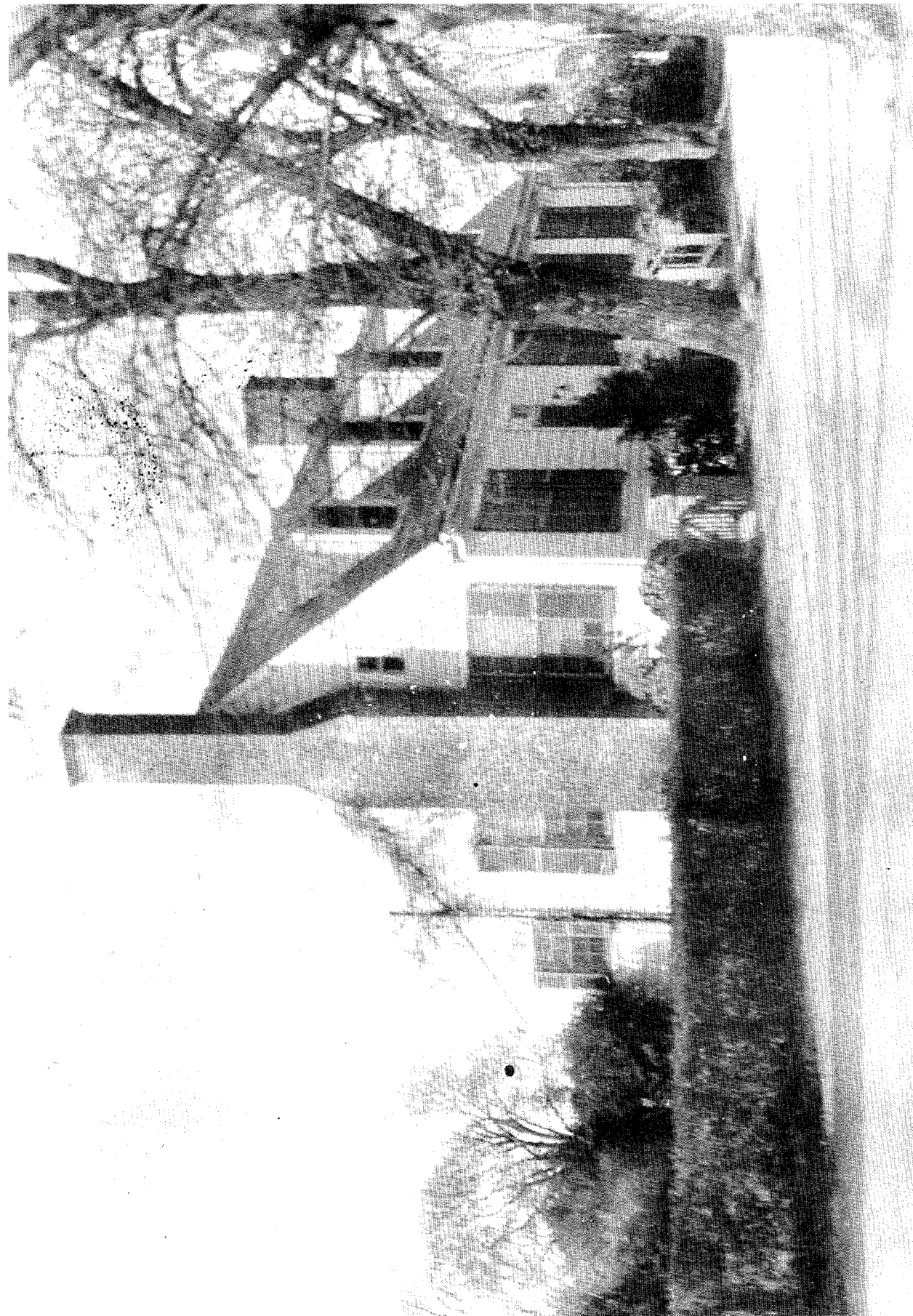


Illustration No. 4



Illustration No. 5

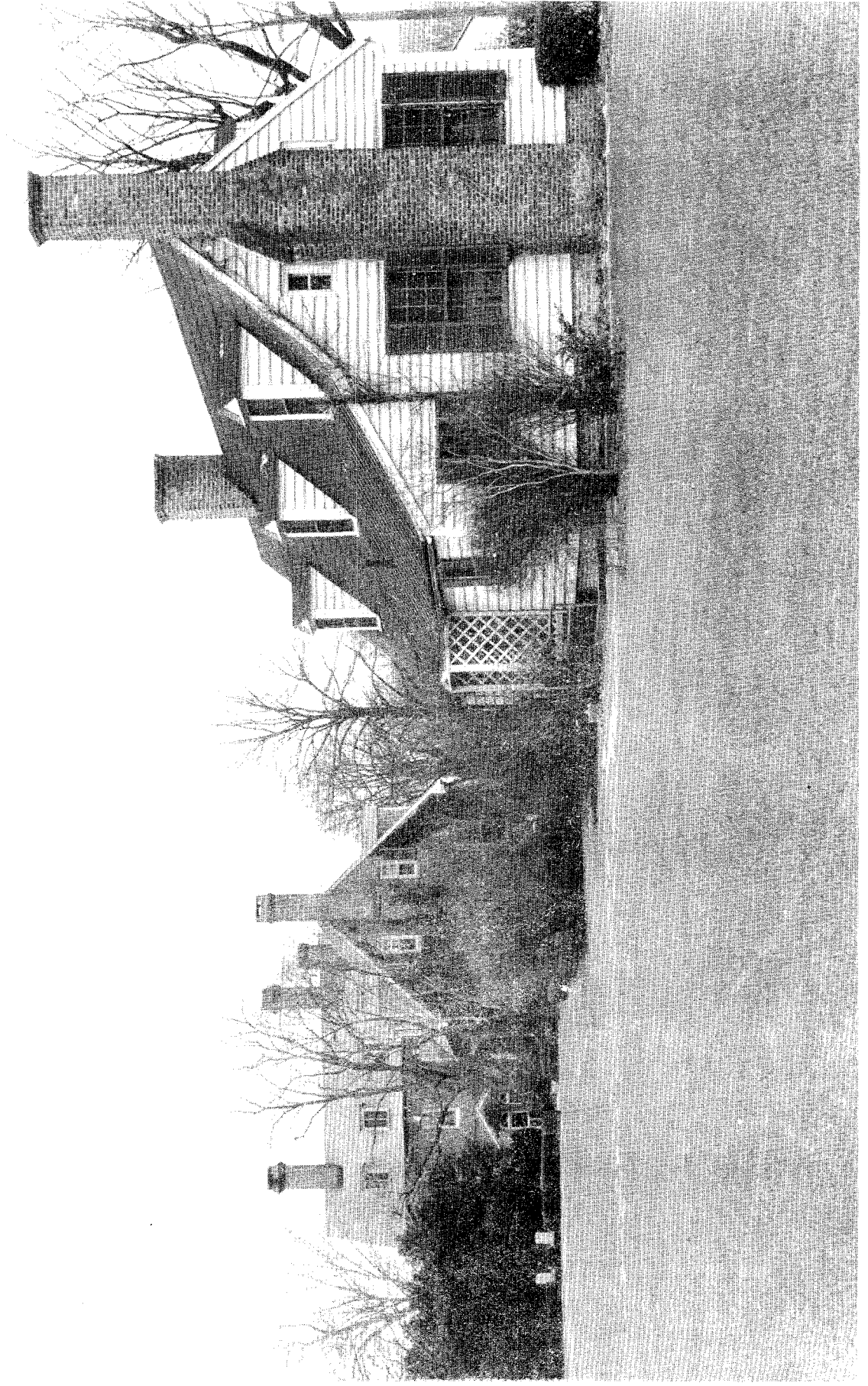


Illustration No. 6

